

JULY, 1946

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by Alexander Bender

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THEATRE WORLD



John Vickers

**"The
Guinea-
Pig"**

Hartley: I am not having any more boys like Read in the house.

Robert Flemyng as Nigel Lorraine, B.A., and Cecil Trouncer as Lloyd Hartley, M.A., in a scene from Warren Chetham Strode's successful new play at the Criterion Theatre.

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April, 1946

IN the first night of *Macbeth* at the Winter Garden, when Donald Wolfit gave a most moving performance as the Thane, and Patricia Jessel was one of the finest Lady Macbeths we have seen, Mr. Wolfit was moved to reprove the audience, consisting largely of young students, for their ill-mannered behaviour during the playing of this great tragedy. He pointed out that the education authorities had asked him to include *Macbeth* in his London season repertoire as it is the set play for this year's matriculation examination. As a member of the audience I fully approved Mr. Wolfit's protest; the pointless laughter and general air of flippancy among this large group of sixteens-plus was insupportable. How, I wondered, would a similar group of students behave in Copenhagen, Stockholm, Leningrad or Moscow?

Then again I wondered if we ought not to march on the Ministry of Education with a banner inscribed "Hands off Shakespeare." *Hamlet* was the set play allotted to me, and after these many years I still shudder to think how my appreciation of this greatest of all tragedies was jeopardised by the follies of examination grind. The truth is that few students pass on to the higher branches of literary criticism. At sixteen, in most cases, a close analysis of what is alleged to have been in Shakespeare's mind and wholesale cramming of his lines, is sheer boredom. In the end a youngster cannot see the wood for the trees; Shakespeare for him ceases to be the great human whose genius spilled out of him like a mountain torrent; spontaneous, inevitable. Surely if the student is brought to Shakespeare with no hint of an examination paper in the offing, providing his critical judgment has been developed—which after

all, should be the aim of all true education—he must fall under the spell immediately.

It seems a long way indeed from the Ministry of Education to the courtyard of the historic George Inn, Southwark, where once again a Birthday Commemoration Performance is being given, at 3.30 p.m. on Saturday, April 27th. *The Tempest* is the play selected to be acted this year as an Elizabethan Masque by the Overian Masque Company, with Doreen Simmonds directing. It is a happy thought that this survival of the Inn-yard plays of the Travelling Players of Shakespeare's day is still with us.

The past few weeks have been very busy ones in and around the West End. Well over twenty new productions have seen the light of day, and it has been quite impossible to include reviews of all of them. *Evangeline* (Cambridge); *Macbeth* (Winter Garden); *The Wise Have Not Spoken* (King's, Hammersmith); the Ruth Draper season at the Apollo; and *The Lady from the Sea* (Arts) are among these.

Among some interesting new plays will be the Tennent Plays Ltd. production of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* to be presented at the New on April 30th; Patrick Hamilton's *The Governess* came to the Embassy on March 26th. There is every indication at the time of going to press that the eventual West End home of the Jack Hulbert-Bobby Howes revue, *Here Come the Boys*, will be the Saville, which theatre, incidentally, was recently bought by Edmar Productions Limited for a sum in the neighbourhood of three hundred thousand pounds. Bernard Delfont, we hear, has secured a twenty-one years' lease of the Saville, with the intention of establishing an all-musical productions policy at that charming theatre.

F.S.

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New Shows of the Month

- "All God's Chillun Got Wings"—Unity, February 19th.
- "The Guinea-Pig"—Criterion, February 19th.
- "Stage Door"—Saville, February 21st.
- "Mary Rose"—Granville, February 26th.
- "Red Roses for Me"—Embassy, February 26th.
- "A Man About The House"—Piccadilly, February 27th.
- "Dear Ruth"—St. James's, February 28th.
- "Romeo and Juliet"—Kings, Hammersmith, March 1st.
- "Century for George"—Scala, March 4th.
- "Fifty-Fifty"—Strand, March 6th.
- "Song of Norway"—Palace, March 7th.
(See pages 11-18.)
- "St. Joan"—Kings, Hammersmith, March 7th.
- "Let Tyrants Tremble"—Scala, March 11th.
- "Tomorrow's Child"—Lyric, Hammersmith, March 12th.
- "Fountain of Youth"—Lindsey, March 12th.
- "Valley of Ajjalon"—Gateway, March 12th.

"All God's Chillun Got Wings"

THE Unity Repertory Company gave Eugene O'Neill's moving play as the first production of their professional status. Robert Adams and Ida Shepley, two gifted coloured players, were guest artistes and gave most convincing performances as the negro who contracts a mixed marriage and his sister of the biased outlook, though others in the company were not able to soar to the same rare heights. Louie Bradley had the onerous task of presenting the wife who was ostracised for her marriage, but did not develop the poignancy of the situation to the full.

Casey Jones, by Robert Ardrey, was produced on March 19th as the second production, and will be followed by *The Shepherd and the Hunter*, by David Martin, the latter play dealing with the problem of Palestine.

L.J.

"The Guinea-Pig"

IF we had wondered where the season's new and attractive plays were coming from, this play, which heralded several other worthwhile productions in and around London, set our minds at rest. It is not only that the play poses a topical problem but that the author, Warren Chetham Strode, knows how to people his stage with plausible folk who exactly fit their surroundings.

The play is set in a famous public school and the experimental guinea-pig is a rough Cockney diamond who is given a scholar-

ship to the sacred precincts. One may or may not agree that it would be possible in three years to turn the rebellious Read into the well-mannered and nicely spoken young man of the last act who has both feet planted on the way to Cambridge, but perhaps the main theme is the conflict of tradition in the shape of the Housemaster who is prejudiced against the experiment from the start, and the more progressive elements personified by the new master back from the war who by his patience and understanding is the real reason for the experiment's success.

Although the idea is serious enough the play is full of humour and humanity. The acting is above reproach, particularly from Cecil Trouner as Lloyd Hartley, the Housemaster, Robert Flemyng as Nigel Lorraine, the new master, and Edith Sharpe as Mrs. Hartley; this last a most appealing portrayal of a kindly Housemaster's wife who works quietly and efficiently for the well-being of the boys and her husband alike. Derek Blomfield as Read very cleverly achieves the metamorphosis of unruly Cockney boy to serious-minded student. Joan Hickson and Duncan Lewis give two gems of character acting as Read's lower-class parents: (perhaps the real triumph of the experiment was that the lad after three years in a public school was not in the least embarrassed when they visited the school).

F.S.

"Stage Door"

THERE was only one character that I believed in wholeheartedly in this story of an American theatrical hostel where aspirants for Broadway learn that the path to success on the stage is thorny indeed, and that was a minor one whose tragedy had nothing to do with dramatic aspirations: Pauline Letts as the suicide gave a beautiful performance. In spite of Patricia Burke's noble effort I could not believe in the heroine, Terry Randall, who would rather serve in a shop than give up her hopes of a stage career to appear in films. Nor could I believe that any actress worth her salt would fail to act her head off when presented with the chance of a big part, even if she was dragged out of bed and asked to "do her stuff" in a none too attractive dressing gown. Roberta Huby is glamorous enough as the blonde nitwit who achieves film fame; Kathleen Boutil is a sympathetic boarding house keeper, and the numerous other would be actresses and their male admirers do their best with disjointed parts that never really come to life.



Cameron Hall as the bank manager, Harry Green as Joe Bauer and Frank Pettingell as Albert Biggleswade in *Fifty-Fifty*, the successful comedy at the Strand. (Picture by Walter Bird.)

It is only fair to add that this play was a big success on Broadway and as a film.

F.S.

"Mary Rose"

THERE is an element of topicality in *Mary Rose*, which was first produced in 1920, when it was a post-War play of great popularity. The opening scene in the haunted house seemed quite in the now familiar Granville line of entertainment and, perhaps, the younger members of the audience, who may not have been familiar with the play, were disappointed when the scene changed to a Victorian drawing-room and sentiment prevailed. Barrie's spell is not so potent as it was 25 years ago. There was much coughing in the auditorium before the final curtain, but the applause that followed was sufficient to show that the skill of the "old hand" was recognised and the ability of the players appreciated.

Mary Horn's rather elfin and Rackhamish appearance was a great help in the name part and she cleverly got away with a lot of Barrie's baby-talk but some of her high notes were a little shrill. John Nicholson doubled the parts of Simon the sailor and his Australian son and was a source of strength in both roles. The caretaker, Mrs. Tertey, was very well taken indeed by Judith Selmes. The best scenes are the most credible ones in the Morland home and Mr. and Mrs. Morland and their friend Mr. Amy were beautifully played by Hylton Allen,

Renee Kelly and Hugh Pryse. Hubert Mitchell as the scholar ghillie was a great aid to credibility on the "Island That Likes to be Visited."

The decor by Gerik Schjelderup was an excellent and memorable feature of the production.

H.G.M.

"Red Roses for Me"

WE are so accustomed to accept our best plays from the pens of Irish writers that we mistrust our judgment when an Irish play seems to miss perfection. *Red Roses for Me* is not Mr. O'Casey's best play nor is it the best play that Mr. Anthony Hawtrey has presented at the Embassy. It is rather lacking in shape and, as in most of Mr. O'Casey's plays, the characters act on one plane and speak on another. Much proper tribute has been paid to the author's gift for writing rhapsodical dialogue, but rocco rhetoric, if applied indiscriminately, tends to undo a play rather than to make one, for it is destructive of characterisation. The hero in this case is a young man of many interests, intellectual, political and economic, who could not be influenced by mother nor lover against his own highly idealised view of the importance of a strike for an extra 1/- a week and who lost his life in a police charge. The development of the story is quite factitious, but, knowing the author's habit of introducing a bier onto the stage, one expected that the young man would be killed.



MARIANNE DAVIS is playing a leading part in *Make It a Date*, a new revue which opened at the Duchess Theatre on March 20th, too late for review in this issue. Other leading players are Max Wall, Avril Angers, Leigh Stafford, Billy Leonard and Terence Delaney. (*Portrait by Angus McBean*.)

The settings by Henry Bird were very good. Act 3, the bridge over the Liffey, was particularly impressive.

Kieron O'Hanrahan, Eddie Byrne, Alex Dignam and Tristan Rawson gave performances of outstanding quality. The Irish company generally made the acting very pleasurable and there were moments of rare beauty but the combination of poetry and realism was hard to render convincing.

The pitiful plight of Dublin was the theme and the period was "a little while ago." Twenty-five years is a little while in history. Dublin must now be one of the most prosperous cities in the Eastern Hemisphere.

H.G.M.

(*Red Roses for Me* transfers to the Lyric, Hammersmith, on April 9th.)

"A Man about the House"

IT is one of the inevitable facts of playwriting that when an audience is a move ahead of the dramatist all the time, suspense and interest diminish accordingly.

This is the position with John Perry's adaptation of Francis Brett Young's book. When these two English spinsters arrive at the villa at Montfalcone, it is hardly in doubt that the masculine charms of Salvatore will work upon one of them, and the ensuing marriage will take its course to satisfy the Italian's appetite. This major domo is shown as a light-hearted trifler with maids, but when it comes to marrying Agnes, with the chill of British provincialism upon her, the motif is not sex but land hunger for the villa and its grounds. Had the dramatist more adequately explored this Italian's greed or yearning for the land, his

administration of arsenic to remove Agnes would fall into better proportion. As it is, we are left to watch a race between poisoning and denouement, with the solution of Salvatore's suicide a fair probability once the gun has been taken to his bedroom.

Serving this period piece of 1908 is a wealth of interesting acting. Basil Sydney is a fine, florid Salvatore, and his success with Agnes, the dominating sister, has the warmth of a southern sun dispersing a frost. Flora Robson is well cast to show the severity of Agnes yielding to Salvatore's influence; her technical range is such that even the throes of arsenical poisoning have their slightly morbid interest. Betty Sinclair contributes the mouselike qualities for Ellen's submission, and Patricia Hastings is a flouncing Assunta. The evening's entertainment owes much to Ernest Thesiger and Wyndham Goldie. One is a scandal-mongering bachelor steeped in Montfalcone's atmosphere; the other is a British doctor who does convince; both are welcome as masculine contrast to Salvatore.

F.J.D.

"Dear Ruth"

GOOD casting and a high level of acting go a long way towards making this American comedy of young love more acceptable to British tastes than a number of its predecessors. The story is simple enough—a schoolgirl uses her elder sister's name and photograph to conduct uplift correspondence with servicemen overseas. One returns to claim his Ruth but she is already engaged to Albert. The play is the parrying of Bill's ardours by Ruth, her change of heart from Albert to Bill and the devastations of sixteen year old Miriam.

Told with speed and that nimbleness of dialogue which is accepted as American wit, the comedy offers a pleasant evening to a generation of theatregoers far removed from Wilde and Pinero. All of the cast do well. Evelyn Roberts and Betty Warren are the adult foundation—sound performances of that parental abnegation which trans-Atlantic playwrights would persuade us is the feature of family life over there. From the quartette of youngsters, Peter Croft's playing of Albert stands out for its brilliant veracity to a losing hand. Dulcie Gray and Vernon Greeves keep the love-making between Ruth and Bill free of any embarrassment to watch, while Margaret Barton as young Miriam is equal to any situation, even showing how pleasantly a girl of sixteen can look upon red wine. Jane Barrett and Robert Long add another young couple to a very matrimonial story. Richard Bender's production of Norman Krasna's play is most workmanlike, only his final curtain needing a little more point in timing.

F.J.D.

Romeo and Juliet

THE season of plays and music presented by T.R.T. under the direction of Basil C. Langton opened with an unusually satisfying production of *Romeo and Juliet*, one of the best features of which was the delightful playing of Renee Asherson in the part of Juliet. A young actress with the feeling and the technique required for the proper portrayal of this exciting and exacting character is necessarily rare but here was Juliet, looking barely seventeen and making us share the passion and pathos with which her young, tempestuous soul was charged. Shakespeare's heroine seemed perfectly manifest. The two hours' traffic occupied three hours and a quarter but the time was well spent and unnoticed in the passing. Basil C. Langton as Romeo was rather mature and melancholy. Mercutio was a triumph, played with fine flamboyance and an almost Neapolitan exuberance of gesture by Esmond Knight. Agnes Lauchlan made the Nurse impressive in all her moods and Stanford Holme played Peter with a wealth of humour and meaning. Lewis Casson as Chorus gave promise of a treat forthcoming in his beautifully spoken prologue; a promise which the performance fulfilled.

A permanent setting, very attractive in itself, has been designed by Guy Sheppard and the full set was used with rather disappointing indiscrimination for all scenes. Even so, the cluster of characters on the side stairway in the final scene seemed as unnecessary as it was unpicturesque. This was but a slight flaw in a very fine production.

H.G.M.

Fifty-Fifty

NE is never really hoodwinked into thinking that this play was originally written for a Yorkshire setting; the background and tempo are essentially American. However, making allowances for the too frequent mention of Lincoln, this comedy is good entertainment and very well acted by a small company whose energies never flag.

Harry Green sets the pace with a delightful study, not without its pathos, of Joe Bauer, the canning factory owner, whose declining business coincides with a mild revolution among his work people when they set up an "industrial democracy." We are made to sympathise with the harassed capitalist in this case and feel it only fair that the profits the "democracy" hope to share turn out to be an outsize in over-drafts!

Frank Pettingell as the slogan-shouting foreman (who has, however, a heart of gold) is a fine Yorkshire foil for Mr. Green's New World pep, and David Langton as Jack Bauer; Beryl Baxter as Mary Biggleswade; Cameron Hall as an incredibly unscrupulous



"Century for George" Bernard Miles and Jenny Laird in a scene from the new play by Montagu Slater which opened Theatre 46's repertory at the Scala Theatre. This strong play, the story of the British Trade Union movement as seen through several generations of a North Country family, was followed by *Let Tyrants Tremble*, a comedy about the Home Guard by Bernard Miles, and *Face of Coal*, a documentary play by Jack Lindsay and B. L. Coombes.

bank manager for these parts; and Ian Maclean as the supposedly mad would-be benefactor, are all excellent. A nice arrangement of wheels and hooters add local colour.

F.S.

Saint Joan

AS so much of success or failure in this play depends upon the Maid, it can be said at once that T.R.T.'s production succeeds. Ann Casson brings to Joan that blend of youthful simplicity, mature confidence, and unquenchable faith which enables a peasant girl to match king or bishop. She does not falter or quaver; her recantation scene is beautifully played to show a young woman's shrinking from the fire, while not forfeiting the ultimate strength to prefer it to living death. The rest of the cast give her good support, but several members could copy this Joan's audibility. Sir Lewis Casson gives the play a simple but quick-moving production, using curtains and set scenes. He also plays the Bishop of Beauvais, with authority and discretion, confronting W. E. Holloway's well-poised Warwick with that clerical balance to secular interest which is so much of the author's theme. Esmond Knight's doubling of Baudricourt and Inquisitor is an interesting contrast; Stanford Holmes' Dauphin has plenty of humour, perhaps no more exaggerated than the dramatist's intention; Alan Judd is a forceful Dunois with a sensitive quality in his acting in the cathedral scene of Joan's disillusionment. Frank Foster's Stogumber is excellent.

F.J.D.

"Tomorrow's Child"

THE author of this neat little comedy does not tilt at windmills. His timely jab at bureaucracy is not so overlaid with humour that we cannot sense the truth behind the fun, and there are one or two passages of sustained dialogue that reach real heights of rhetoric.

We are introduced to the next generation living in a block of communal flats in 1965 with standard furniture and vitamin meals automatically served through a natty hatch. All day long the young hopefuls are blared at through the community loudspeaker; their lives are State-planned from morning exercises to evening recreation. The heroine Elizabeth, a Civil Servant in the Ministry of Miscellaneous Plans and hitherto a model citizen, falls in love with a non-State-aided artist, which goes to show that nature will out. There are some extremely funny situations arising out of the visit of the girl's much divorced parents, rare survivors from the bad old "free and easy" days and their conflict with the Community Warden, a cheerful and ignorant Paul Pry.

The acting is consistently good, with Sheila Sim as the heroine, Joyce Linden as Utility Richards, an artless fellow Civil Servant with whom she shares her flat; Nigel Patrick as the non-State-aided artist, and Wallas Eaton as the dehydrated young

man from the Ministry Elizabeth nearly marries. Dorothy Lane and Hedley Briggs are Elizabeth's "non-co-operative" parents and Richard Wordsworth is all that we feel sure a Community Warden ought to be.

F.S.

"Fountain of Youth"

NEW authors continue to find a welcome at Notting Hill Gate. Mr. Lance Hamilton's new comedy *Fountain of Youth* was kindly received at its first performance. It deals with the domestic and emotional embarrassment of a professor whose twenty-year search for the Elixir of Life is abruptly ended by a mysterious assistant who knew the secret all along and who uses it on his principal's wife. Winifred Melville looked charming as the rejuvenated wife and giggled very youthfully; but does youth giggle to-day? The many allusions to the disparity of years between her and her husband under the changed conditions missed much of their point because Ferdy Mayne, as the elderly scientist, looked a handsome young man of 30. Esme Percy had some uphill work as the mysterious assistant but there was a rewarding moment for him and for the audience in the third act, when he had a quite solemnizing speech about the horror and loneliness of unending earthly existence.

H.G.M.

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Louisa: How can you talk of failure with everyone singing your praises?

HALINA VICTORIA as Nina, JANET HAMILTON-SMITH as Louisa Giovanni and JOHN HARGREAVES as Edvard Grieg in a scene from Act II.

"Song of Norway"

EMILE LITTLER'S *Song of Norway* received a great welcome at the Palace, following its most successful provincial tour. This enchanting operetta, based on the life and music of Edvard Grieg, is certain to have a popular appeal, with its spectacular production, fine singing and lovely music, and, last but not least, its several most attractive ballets. The symphony orchestra conducted by Gideon Fagan does splendid work and the direction by Charles Hickman is masterly.

John Hargreaves, Halina Victoria, Janet Hamilton-Smith, Arthur Servent and Bernard Ansell are at the head of a long company which put every ounce into making this one of the most colourful musicals of recent times. The choreography of the Concerto Ballet and Freddy and His Fiddle are by Robert Helpmann; The Pillow Dance, the Peer Gynt Ballet and all other dances by Pauline Grant.

Song of Norway has been a great success on Broadway, where it has been running for some time, proof of the fact that operettas like this, with its background of music by a famous composer, have a universal appeal. The purist may object to the way some of the Grieg music is set to song, though all must admire the ingenuity with which this has been done, and the programme gives in full the original sources of the musical adaptations.

PICTURES BY ALEXANDER BENDER



Halina Victoria as Nina Hagerup in the opening scene. Nina, who has just returned to her home after a long absence, meets Edvard Grieg and his friend Rikard Nordraak, poet and songwriter, on Troldhaugen (Hill of the Trolls) just outside the town of Bergen. It is Midsummer's Eve, 1860. (The part of Rikard is played by Arthur Servent.)



The peasants dance the Bridal Pillow Dance in a square on the outskirts of Bergen. A scene from Act I.



Another delightful number from Act I, "Freddy and His Fiddle." (Jan Lawski as Freddy)



The colourful
al scene showing
peasants and
folk dancing to
le and his fiddle

I will prove to
Peppi, that I still
do.

Hamilton-Smith
Louisa Giovanni
Bernard Ansell as
Peppi Le Loup,
adoring husband
Mount and Count
me by chance to
n but Louisa is
chanted that she
is to stay. Later,
she meets Ed
Grieg, she is im
ed by his charm
alent, and, eager
ve him as her
e, offers him
st of her accom
Grieg accepts.





Louisa: My mother told me to choose this one.
The Trollger Cake ceremony. Louisa is determined to pick the name of Edvard Grie-

Below: Children: Go on, kiss her, Edvard.
Edvard and Nina are betrothed, and Louisa, out of pique, hastens his departure.



ight: Janet Hamilton-Smith as Luisa Giovanni in the opening scene of Act II, one year later.



The delightful ball in Tito's Chocolate Shop in Rome, one year later. The dancers are John Gram, Patricia Martinet and Wendy Andon.



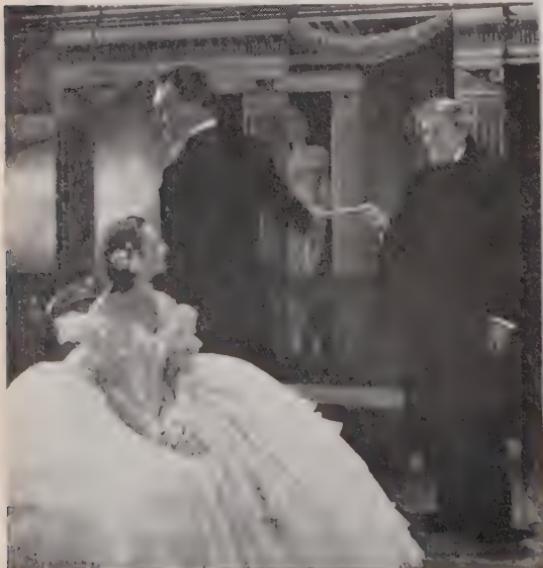
w: The ball in the Villa Cencio during the "Waltz Eternal."





Louisa and Nina (now Grieg's wife) meet at the ball. Grieg has achieved a great name for himself and a Ballet to his Peer Gynt music is performed in his honour.

Below : Father Nordraak (Charles Doran) brings news that his son, Rikard, Grieg's old friend and inspirer, is dead.



Much to Nina's joy, Edvard, stirred by his friend's last wish that he should not forget his beloved Norway, decides to return home with his wife and devote himself to his country and people.



The Christmas scene at Grieg's house in Roldhaugen, some time later. Edvard and Nina have given a party and all is happiness and song. Grieg's mother (Olive Cuthbert) conducts the singers.

Mother Grieg: I am very proud of my Edvard.

Grieg's mother (Olive Cuthbert), who had always encouraged her son's love of music, now sees her dreams fulfilled, for Edvard is a great and famous composer.





Nina : Let me hear Rik's words again... From you.

Edvard reads again the words of Rikard's poem *The Song of Norway* and then sits down to play his Piano Concerto.



The closing scene of "Song of Norway."

More about Covent Garden

By AUDREY WILLIAMSON

Of all followers of the arts in England the balletgoer is the most incalculable and least generous in reaction. Gilbert's 'idiot who praises with enthusiastic tone Every century but this and every country but his own' finds in him his closest modern counterpart, if one is to judge by the outburst of vituperation, in the form of letters to ballet critics and the press, which has followed the appearance of English ballet at Covent Garden; a new summit, one would have thought, of achievement after many years of struggle and development in the face of great difficulties of finance and of War.

One would more respect this ill-timed attack, which was not supported by any knowledgeable critics in the press, if it were based on classical standards created by previous full-length productions of Petipa's *The Sleeping Beauty* as performed by the greatest dancers of the past. It comes, however, mainly from one small group in the audience, springing originally from the gallery, whose criterion appears to be the performances of the short and largely altered *divertissement*, *Aurora's Wedding*, by the de Basil company at Covent Garden with two brilliant but artistically immature children, Toumanova and Baronova, in the ballerina rôle. The only other standards quoted are those of a largely rechoreographed version of the full-length ballet performed in Moscow (where the traditions have never been considered equal to those of Leningrad) during the War.

It is obvious to any unprejudiced mind that the *suite de danses* of *Aurora's Wedding* can make nothing like the variety of demands which are made on a company by a performance of Petipa's *The Sleeping Beauty*, and this is particularly true of the ballerina rôle. Where *Aurora's Wedding* requires only a dancer capable of performing a great classical *pas de deux* and solo, *The Sleeping Beauty* requires an artist who can develop the character and whose dancing range includes the romantic spirituality of the Vision Scene as well as the nobility and attack of the finale. I saw Baronova and Toumanova in *Aurora's Wedding*, and though I admired both (in particular Baronova, who seemed to me nearer the true classical spirit) I do not believe either of them at that time would have been capable of sustaining the whole ballet as brilliantly as Margot Fonteyn does now. The finest work of both was in modern ballets, whereas Margot Fonteyn is a classical ballerina of the rarest quality by every natural law of temperament, build and technique. Daniilova, a mature artist and superb classicist, might have matched her, but she appeared more often as the Blue Bird and was never called upon to create a three-act ballerina rôle.

The Russian company had many more fine male dancers than the English, especially for character work, though the pure classical dancing was not faultless, as an un-stylish Blue Bird and unfinished Florestan in a film shown recently by the London Archives of the Dance remind us. And apart from Massine they never had a male dancer comparable in artistic stature to Helpmann. With regard to women classical soloists I can only say that I personally consider the dancing of the "Fairy" variations by Beryl Grey, Moira Shearer, Anne Negus and Margaret Dale on the first night of *The Sleeping Beauty* at Covent Garden fully equal in standard to the equivalents of Tamara Grigorjeva, Anna Adrianova and their companions in the Russian *Aurora's Wedding*.

It is time, I think, we got a true perspective in this matter; the "Russian Legend" has grown like a snowball since the War and tended to exaggerate the accomplishment of what was, apart from one or two great and mature artists, a company largely young and inexperienced like our own. This is neither to underrate the de Basil and Monte Carlo companies nor to overrate Sadler's Wells: the first had a greater stream of natural talent to draw upon (it was fed from dance studios all over the world) and could more easily produce strong alternative dancers in leading rôles. Even so it never attempted to stage the same ballet every night for a period of four weeks, which is the task Sadler's Wells has set itself with *The Sleeping Beauty* at Covent Garden; not, I think, with complete success. Mechanical dancing is fatal to ballet, which demands feeling and expression to bring it to life, and it is slipped into very easily in a ballet of this kind, where there is little characterisation to keep the dancers mentally interested.

On the whole, nevertheless, the standard in *The Sleeping Beauty* has been quite well maintained, though it would be idle to pretend that the company possesses another ballerina of Margot Fonteyn's brilliance for the rôle of Aurora. (I disagree as much with the programme lettering which excludes her and Robert Helpmann from the status they have so long earned as "principal dancers" as I do with the total exclusion of the names of Ninette de Valois and Helpmann, composers of some of the greatest ballets in the repertoire, as choreographers). Pamela May, however, dances a radiantly pretty Aurora which attains real authority in the supported *adagio* work, and Moira Shearer has given an exciting first performance which grew in stature as the ballet proceeded, an encouraging proof of the dancer's "staying power." Apart from slight faults of nervousness and inexperience this

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"The Sleeping Beauty"

● Scenes from the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company's new rendering of Tchaikowsky's *The Sleeping Beauty*, which reopened the Opera House, Covent Garden, in February. *Above:* The vision scene from Act II, and *below*: the finale of Act III, both of which give some idea of the magnificent settings devised by Oliver Messel.



ENGLISH BALLET AT COVENT GARDEN

PICTURES

by
EDWARD
MANDINIAN



Margot Fonteyn as the Princess Aurora and Robert Helpmann as the Prince.

Below : Moira Shearer as Aurora and David Paltenghi as the Prince. Pamela May has also made a deep impression in the exacting role of the Princess. Below, right : Margaret Dale as the Fairy of the Golden Vine dances the "Finger" variation.





In the News

Above:

GRIFFITH JONES

playing Lord Darlington in the Haymarket production of *Lady Windermere's Fan*, which has just passed its 300th performance. This popular young actor also had leading roles in two of the most successful films of the year—*The Rake's Progress* and *The Wicked Lady*.

Above right:

RONALD SHINER

as the cockney aircraftsman, Porter, the chief reason for the outstanding success of ex-Flight Lt. R. F. Delderfield's Air Force comedy, *Worm's Eye View*. Originally produced at the Embassy Theatre, Swiss Cottage, this play is proving the biggest draw in the 16 years of the Whitehall Theatre.

Right:

SONIA DRESDEL

plays Nurse Wayland in *The Sacred Flame*, which has successfully transferred from the St. Martin's to the Westminster Theatre.



EVERY now and then there comes to the New York stage a production that is completely alien to the usual product seen thereabouts—one that thumbs its nose at commercialism and pays homage to the best that is theatre. At the present time we have the good fortune of having two such productions. A new version of Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone*, by the French author Jean Anouilh adapted by Lewis Galantiere, is being presented by Katharine Cornell in association with Gilbert Miller, and Michael Myerberg's fabulously beautiful production of *Lute Song*, which the late Sidney Howard and Will Irwin fashioned from the Chinese classic *Pi-pa-ki* is starring the lovely Mary Martin.

These plays aim high and although they miss their mark they contribute so much beauty, true feeling, emotion and ideas to spark the mind they refuse to be forgotten. And they also taunt because neither play gives complete satisfaction. They hold out promise but never bring to fulfilment their potentialities. But yet they serve as beacons and brilliant reminders of the wondrous heights the theatre could reach were it not chained so securely to the all-powerful dollar which makes such plays the exception rather than the rule..

While overseas entertaining the armed forces in *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, Miss Cornell got to Paris and there saw Jean Anouilh's *Antigone*, a play with a most intriguing historical background. Written and produced in Paris in 1943, a year which you will recall saw France occupied by the Nazis, *Antigone* had to receive the approval of the German censor before it could be performed. The author, precariously perched between the devil and the deep, did the seemingly impossible and turned out a play which not only satisfied the Nazis but which served from alienating the French populace as a rallying point and a symbol of the spiritual independence of France. And his play still runs on over there.

It is, of course, these stringent conditions imposed on the author that militates most against his play as a work of art even though he follows closely Sophocles' story. Creon, Jocasta's brother, becomes King of



Vandamm Studio

Cedric Hardwicke and Katharine Cornell in
Antigone

is liable to death. *Antigone* defies her uncle's godless decree and knowing full well her fate if caught attempts to bury her brother. The struggle that ensues between Creon and Antigone stems from this religious issue and broadens into a fight between individual freedom versus dictatorship. *Antigone* is put to death. Haemon, her fiance and Creon's son, kills himself, and his mother, Eurydice, hearing of her son's death, kills herself. Thus the pattern of a true tragedy is followed but it never comes off. The Nazis saw to it that Creon, the most "logical" of all dictators, got a complete and sympathetic hearing and that *Antigone* failed to vanquish him in her life

Echoes from Broadway

BY OUR AMERICAN CORRESPONDENT E. MAWBY GREEN

Thebes when Oedipus and Jocasta's two sons, Eteocles and Polynices, kill each other in combat. For the safety of the state, Creon orders that Eteocles only shall be buried with honours. Polynices he labels traitor and decrees shall be left for the vultures and anyone attempting to bury him

or her death. However, the French people living under the Nazi terror supplied from their own experience and emotions the lacking arguments for *Antigone* and the play became a patriotic and political success. Recognizing this to be the case, M. Galan-

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Negro Ballet

THE STORY OF
AN INTERESTING
NEW VENTURE

by

Eric Johns

Left:

BERTO PASUKA

(Portrait by Angus
McBean)

BLACK magic does exist. A young negro dancer, Berto Pasuka, recently convinced me in a Soho rehearsal room by causing waves of fluid rhythm to ripple gracefully down his slender arms from shoulder-blade to finger-tip. Without being told, I knew I was watching a feat quite beyond the power of Massine, Lifar, Dolin, Helmann, or any other European dancer. It was black magic!

Pasuka's black magic is not a ritual performed in dark and deadly secret behind the closed doors of the negro colony. In fact, it will soon be practised on a brightly-lit stage, open to public gaze, when this 26-year-old artist brings the first negro ballet to London at the Twentieth Century Theatre, Westbourne Grove, on April 30th for an eight weeks' season.

Son of an Indian mother and a negro father, Pasuka was born in Kingston, Jamaica, where his father apprenticed him to a dentist after leaving the convent school. The first time the boy saw a tooth extracted he realised dentistry could no longer be seriously considered as a career, since the mere sight of blood had the most nauseating effect upon him.

Some other means of earning a living had to be sought. The boy mixed freely with the Maroon Negroes, originally descended from runaway slaves. He was fascinated by their rhythmic dances and became quite an expert performer, making his first public appearance at the Ward Theatre, Kingston, one Christmas morning, as a peasant

woman. Male negro dancers often impersonate the fairer sex on the stage, just as boys played women's parts in the Elizabethan theatre.

That Christmas morning was a milestone in Pasuka's life. Realising that tourists visiting Jamaica invariably wanted to see native dancing, the boy gathered together a troupe of his friends to offer such entertainment. They sang native songs and Pasuka devised a sacrificial Blood Dance—a Voodoo ritual dance— influenced by the horror he had experienced in the dentist's surgery.

Even in tropical Jamaica Pasuka heard of the wonders of the Russian ballet, so he decided to come to England in 1939 for a course in ballet training in order to discipline his native dancing. A couple of months before war broke out he arrived in Liverpool with a few pounds in his pocket. Within a week or two, the trying English summer climate struck him down with pneumonia, and his savings were soon expended on hospital fees and the cost of convalescing.

Later, in London, he had a tough time keeping body and soul together. He brought the breath of the jungle to cabaret in a few West-End night clubs, and was in good demand as a model. Sculptors, photographers and painters, admiring his fine physique and intelligent head, were anxious to immortalise him in their respective media.

When *Men of Two Worlds* was filmed at Denham, with a Tanganyika background,

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Alexandra Danilova

ALEXANDRA DANILOVA, who is now dancing in America from coast to coast as prima ballerina of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo Company. She has just won golden opinions in the title-role of Glazounov's *RAYMONDA*, last danced in London at the old Alhambra by Nemtchinova and the Lithuanian Ballet. Danilova is herself responsible for the choreography of this new production, in collaboration with Balanchine. After a triumphant season in New York she leaves for an extensive tour of Canada.



"The Circle" in Moscow

It is interesting to compare these pictures of Somerset Maugham's *The Circle* as produced at the Moscow Theatre of Drama with the recent revival at the Haymarket Theatre. The opening scene, above, gives an idea of Moscow's conception of an English country house. Left: A scene from Act I. Teddy (Samoilov) declares his love for Elizabeth (Maria Babanova). Below (L. to R.): Orlov as Clive Champion-Chenee; Judith Glizer as Lady Kitty and Khanov as Lord Porteous.

Photos by Gladstein and Palve



Somerset Maugham on the Soviet Stage

by NIKOLAI VOLKOV

SOMERSET MAUGHAM, the romanticist and dramatist, is well-known to the Russian reader and theatre-goer. Many of his plays ran in the capital and provincial theatres in pre-revolutionary Russia. He won recognition for his "drawing-room" comedies, *Lenny Frederick* and particularly *Mistress Dott*, staged in Russian under the title *I Want it That Day*, which was a great favourite with leading actresses.

Another successful Maugham play was *Promised Land*, excellently staged in the twenties, after the October Revolution, by the then existing 4th studio of the Moscow Art Theatre. The success of this play is explained largely by the fact, as Maugham himself admitted, that he wrote it under the influence of Chekhov. Having read *The Three Sisters*, he was amazed by the new methods and type of drama. This "Chekhov quality" in the refraction of the English dramatist was well understood by the Moscow studio pupils and they played *Promised Land* with the exhilaration which spoke the perfection of the theatrical school of Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko. Very popular were the widely differing presentations of Maugham's play *Skin* (from his story *Sadie Thompson*), which was frequently staged in Moscow and Leningrad, and which brought to the lime-light one of the finest actresses of the older generation—Elena Granovskaya.

The Moon and Sixpence

As a prose writer, Somerset Maugham became better known in the Soviet Union in 1929 after his novel *Ashenden or the British Agent* was translated into Russian, and when two publishing houses simultaneously issued his novel *The Moon and Sixpence*, a book which attracted a great deal of attention. And since the Moscow Museum of New Western Art has one of the best collections of Gauguin's works and his book, *Noa-Noa*, had been through several editions in the Russian language, interest in Maugham's book is quite understandable. *The Moon and Sixpence* served as a biographical commentary, as it were, an appreciation of the new West-European art in Russia.

The current theatrical season in Moscow opened in a revival of Maugham's plays. The Moscow Theatre of Drama has just presented a premiere of Maugham's comedy *The Circle*, and the Moscow Theatre of Comedy shortly intends to stage another Maugham comedy, *Penelope*, which, by the

way, formerly ran in provincial theatres under the title of *The Wife*.

The Circle as produced by Fedor Kaverin at the Moscow Theatre of Drama is somewhat conventional in style. It stresses the "drawing room" character of the play and the author's irony skilfully woven into the lyric and comic incidents. The psychological emotions of the principal characters and the comic situations are heightened by specially written music which creates a fine lyric background for the acting. An attractive feature of Victor Shestakov's very effective scenic designs are two flower vases standing at the portals of the stage. The emotional mood of the action is enhanced in each act by different coloured flowers. Thus, before the beginning of the second act red flowers, symbolising passion, are in the vases, while the white bouquets in the third act serve as the *vignette* which leads to the *denouement* of the play, to the triumph of the love of Elizabeth and Teddy over the marriage circle in which the young woman is stifled by a life with a husband she does not love.

The Circle is played by the best cast of the theatre. Distinguished for their performances are Judith Glizer as old Lady Katherine and Maria Babanova playing young Elizabeth.

Babanova is one of the best lyric-comic types on the Russian stage. Her playing is generally distinctive for numerous fine details and psychological nuances. In Babanova's portrayal of Elizabeth the spectator is captivated by the charm of her skilful acting and winning personality.

Judith Glizer is an actress of vivacious and strong temperament. In contrast to Babanova she draws her characters in broad strokes and vivid tones. As Katherine, Glizer paints an intriguing portrait of an elderly woman with a past.

A different outlook

The Circle, revolving around the subject of marriage, will hardly stir the Soviet spectator, as his approach to love, marriage and family is much deeper and more significant than that depicted in Maugham's play. However, the clever dialogue and brilliant scenes make *The Circle* a fine play. Audiences will enjoy it for these qualities, but it will not overshadow the impression created by Maugham's real masterpiece, his novel *The Moon and Sixpence*.

See pictures on page facing.

tiere, in adapting the play for American audiences built up his Antigone, his one-man Chorus, and his Haemon but never quite enough to overpower the tyrant. And the American people are incapable of supplying the missing emotion to pull the play over the last hurdle, so *Antigone* will go down over here as merely an interesting experiment in the theatre.

The acting follows the play. Creon, the best defined character, is played by Cedric Hardwicke, and his is the best performance. He is tremendously impressive as the cynical, tired and all-powerful ruler, developing his part with a minimum of gestures yet standing so solidly on the stage that everybody else seems to be acting while he is Creon. Miss Cornell, as the brooding and intense Antigone, brings all her artistry to the role. She seethes with the inward fire of a still volcano and when her authors are with her she erupts with noble defiance and is stirringly effective. From this portrayal there is every indication that had Miss Cornell elected to do Sophocles' original *Antigone*, she would have triumphed as completely as Laurence Olivier seems to have done in London's *Oedipus*.

The setting designed by Raymond Sovey consists solely of a grey curtain with three steps in front of it and the stage practically bare except for a table and a few chairs. The place is still ancient Thebes but the women wear simple modern robes designed by Valentina while the men are attired in evening clothes. The dialogue is a none too happy mixture of the lyrical with modern colloquialisms, and the difficult task of directing a work as static as *Antigone* has been mastered by the expert Guthrie McClintic.

In presenting *Lute Song*, Michael Myerberg has for the second time put out his neck and a fortune, brushing off all those sages who advised him against doing a property so obviously lacking in commercial appeal. His first rebellion against the cut-and-dried Broadway fare was his widely discussed production of Thornton Wilder's controversial *Skin of our Teeth*.

Lute Song tells of an ambitious scholar Tsai-Yong (Yul Brynner) who leaves his wife (Mary Martin) and parents (Augustin Duncan and Mildred Dunnock) behind in their small village while he goes to the capital to take the examinations. He is more than successful in the big city and the Imperial preceptor (McKay Morris) forces him to marry his daughter (Helen Craig). Back home his parents die of famine and his first wife, on the advice of the gods, sets out to find her husband in the guise of a nun. Eventually, with the aid of the second wife, she is reunited with her husband.

There are some poignant moments in the telling of this tale, but as a whole the play

is not the thing for us. We are not being facetious when we say you'd probably have to be a Chinaman to fully appreciate the play. To them it must have a deep emotional significance to have lasted 500 years. We view it with Occidental detachment and find it charming, delicate, quaint but never soul-stirring.

But the production that Robert Edmond Jones has designed for *Lute Song* is one of the rarest beauty. We cannot remember when any designer has given such aesthetic pleasure. Some settings and costumes in their simplicity of colour and design have the power of fine sculpture while others are literally breathtaking in their richness and magnificence. And on this count *Lute Song* will always be treasured.

Mary Martin approaches her role with honesty and sincerity and it stands her in good stead, for she is unfortunately miscast. Being so glamorously American, she finds it difficult to create the illusion of Chinese simplicity. Raymond Scott has provided her with several exquisite little numbers, among them "Monkey See Monkey Do" and "Mountain High, Valley Low," which she sings delightfully. Yenchi Nimura staged the exciting Oriental dance and John Houseman's over-all direction is necessarily mannered and a bit self-conscious.

The only doubt left now in the destiny of *Born Yesterday*, a new comedy authored and staged by Garson Kanin, is how many years it is good for. Starting its pre-Broadway tour with no less a luminary than Jean Arthur to bewitch the box-office producer Max Gordon suffered a severe setback when it became necessary for Miss Arthur to withdraw and return to Hollywood by way of the hospital. Realising it would be impossible to snare another star of Miss Arthur's calibre on such short notice, Mr. Gordon and Mr. Kanin met their problem squarely and calmly announced that Judy Holliday — hitherto remembered only for a conspicuous titbit in last season's unlucky *Kiss Them for Me* — would take over the role in Philadelphia. So loud were the plaudits for Miss Holliday's performance that overnight the dollars which had been refunded due to Miss Arthur's inability to go on were returned with lightning rapidity, and now that *Born Yesterday* is safely saddled to Broadway and an approved hit, Miss Holliday's success is complete.

The part of Billie Dawn fits Miss Holliday tighter than a pair of tights. Until Harry Brock (Paul Douglas), a czar in scrap iron took her out of the chorus of "Anything Goes" and wrapped her in two minks Billie Dawn had escaped an education and the ways of a wolf with a woman. Now this illiterate scrap mogul has descended on Washington, dug his way into a super-

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The New Idea at Stratford

by SIR BARRY JACKSON, DIRECTOR

TADITION should never be outraged by radical change, but neither should it courage the stereotyped—particularly regarding Shakespeare and the classical plays; and in this brief pre-view of the first post-Stratford-upon-Avon Shakespeare Festival, I wish as Director to give points of policy which will ensure the development and healthy continuance of the Festival in years to come.

Next week the company will move from the drab dust of West End rehearsal rooms and continue on the wide, clear stage of the Festival Theatre. Players and producers of the first plays due for the opening are riding ahead and dress and scenic designers have their plans in motion. So far good, and all augurs well for the opening night on 20th April.

Among the most important of my aims a new standard at Stratford is the decision to engage a separate producer for each play to be presented.

In Eric Crozier (*The Tempest*), Nugent Stuck (*Cymbeline*), Peter Brook (*Lover's Four's Lost*), Dorothy Green (*Henry V*), Robert Prentice (*As You Like It*), Michael McGowan (*Macbeth*) and Frank McMullan, Yale University Drama Department (*Measure for Measure*) are contained both youthful and wise experience.

Their combined abilities have the essence of something which is of paramount importance to the theatre of to-day and tomorrow—the Young Idea, through which they are creating fresh angles of approach and treatment of all the plays (and this includes Walter Hudd, who has the Howe *Dr. Faustus* in hand).

They will lend individuality and infuse vitality in maintaining tradition. They will deal a death blow at the stereotyped, that happy issue of the solitary producer who strained and overburdened by eight plays one pair of shoulders. One nurse is not enough for quintuplets!

My idea of fresh approach from every angle is further borne out by the fact that actors—from Valerie Taylor and Robert Harris to young David O'Brien—are all to be new to Stratford, though many have won laurels, Shakespearean and otherwise, both Britain and America. About 50

cent. of the company have recently been released from the Services and enthusiastically are re-settling themselves in the profession they sacrificed in the war years. Old, mature and young, each works for the underlying principle which governs the company—the team spirit.

My criticised decision to open with only three plays, adding one new play every third week until the entire repertoire is presented adds also to the aspired perfection.

It ensures adequate rehearsal and production, but it also adds healthy labour to all concerned. There will be no sitting back with eight plays rehearsed and all in production at once. The artists will play and rehearse.

The plays produced later in the season will, it is hoped, form the nucleus of the following season's repertoire and so result in a continuation of effort. This "long term" view is imperative; the attitude of "play a season, finish and begin again" must be killed.



SIR BARRY JACKSON

While certainly there will be pageantry for the eye, this will by no means be allowed to interfere with the power of the spoken word. Novelty will not override clarity and simplicity. "The text's the text" and language will not be drowned in a spate of music, nor the players be lost in an excess of scenery.

Neither will we be over-academic, but every text used will conform to the research, findings and advice bequeathed by scholars of yesterday and to-day.

Stratford has ceased to be parochial or even national; it is increasingly international. By the standard set, every incentive will be given to the world to make its pilgrimage to the shrine of the Playwright of All Time. From all parts of the globe I receive indications of new and growing interest—from schoolgirls in Atlanta to sages in the Dominions. This is encouraging and must be encouraged by our Dominion and American tour plans.

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Negro Ballet (*Continued from page 24*)

Pasuka was engaged with three other negroes to dance round a camp fire. They were given no dance director. They were just told to dance, to make up a dance "out of their heads," if one can use such an expression to convey the fact that no one was responsible for choreography. Nothing was thought out in advance. However, the dancers acquitted themselves so well that Pasuka decided he would endeavour to establish a negro ballet company in London. After all, negro opera exists with *Porgy and Bess*, so why not negro ballet? His friends said he was crazy, which convinced him more than ever that his idea was a good one.

He has now recruited a company of some eighteen dancers, and created four new ballets for their debut. Their dancing will be an entirely new experience for ballroommen. It is a blending of basic and spontaneous steps and rhythms. It is extempore dancing, reminiscent of Isadora Duncan, who never knew the precise pattern her dance would take until she found herself on the stage and heard the music. The negro is conscious of his mood, but he does not necessarily express it by the same gestures and steps every night.

The music is provided by two pianos, four tom-toms, and two native rattles, known as maraccas. The tom-tom players have no written music. They always follow, and never lead, the dancer. They capture his mood and keep time through an almost telepathic communication existing between them. The dancer becomes intoxicated by the beauty of his own visual rhythm, while the musician, with the beat of the tom-tom, simultaneously reflects it in sound.

Although the negro dances according to mood, varying his performance from night to night, he sometimes touches what he considers perfection in certain sequences of his dance. Such movements are then repeated identically every time the ballet is danced, and thus tend to become one of the basic steps, like the five traditional positions of the feet in the Russian Ballet. While appreciating the beauty of Russian Ballet, Pasuka is opposed to its artificiality.

Pasuka's ballets are dance-dramas, more like the creations of Kurt Jooss than Michel Fokine. They are serious works of art, in no way reminiscent of the familiar tap-dancing of *Blackbird* revues and Harlem-coloured movies. *De Prophet* is based on the true story of a religious maniac who tries to convert villagers by flying to heaven. When he fails he is flung into jail as a lunatic. *They Came*, Pasuka's second ballet, depicts the clash of Race, when white men first land in Africa, with Christianity struggling against primitive religions, and medical science battling with the witch doctors. *Aggrey*, another serious

ballet, is based on the teaching of the negro philosopher of that name, who advocates co-operation between white and coloured races. He compared them to the ebony and ivory notes of a piano and observed that true harmony is only achieved by a blending of both. *Market Day*; a ballet Pasuka's lighter vein, is a gay impression of tourists in a West Indian market place where the samfie-man polishes his brass and sell it as gold.

The costumes are a blaze of colour. Vivid iridescent green beetle wings and bright scarlet John Crow beads bring the very breath of the tropics to these works, created by a negro, and interpreted by negroes, with the accompaniment of their own native instruments.

Negroes often excel as dancers, because it is one of the few professions in which they are universally accepted by society. Many Europeans who object to negro doctors or lawyers will pay fabulous prices to enjoy a negro singer such as Robeson or a cabaret dancer such as Josephine Baker. Dancing gives them some encouragement to work, since they feel there is a chance of reaching the top of the tree, even in countries where a strong colour prejudice exists.

In the theatre the negro has too often been made a figure of fun, which has not helped to maintain the dignity of his race. Pasuka helps to restore it in *Aggrey*, his ballet with a subtle message, presenting in a dance-form the teaching of one of the greatest philosophers of his race. White men and black men populate the surface of the globe—they are brothers—and much good can come out of their intelligent co-operation. Maybe when white theatre-goers see black dancers they will appreciate Aggrey's teaching and thank Pasuka for bringing such refreshing rhythm, colour and common sense into their lives.

The New Idea at Stratford (*Continued*)

And beyond my hopes for creating a Tudor theatre at Stratford, I hope also to see the establishment of a School of Schools, wherein young players can be trained and nurtured in the best tradition and thence to tour the schools of Britain.

The war years have seen the popular surge into the theatre as never before. Why? Our lives and mode of living have been shattered and knocked higgledy-piggledy. People have, therefore, turned to the theatre to recapture the essence of that life and form which the good play offers.

To continue and re-create Shakespeare's perfection at Stratford is my sincere aim and our combined striving and considered effort should not be in vain.

WANTED. "Theatre World" for Sept., 39, July 41, Nov. 41, June 42, Dec. 44, Oct. 45. To complete set. State price and condition. Box 28

The Theatre in Paris and Brussels

by W. St. JOHN TAYLEUR

N the surface there would appear to be little wrong with the theatre in Paris and Brussels. The box-office is busy, long runs abound, and there is no shortage of top-class acting. In fact, just as in London, there seems to be a boom in the entertainment world. It is rather noticeable, however, how many of the successes are importations, or revivals of classics and pre-war plays, and the arrival of some offerings by native playwrights is eagerly and even seriously awaited by the critics.

Turning first of all to Paris, needless to say *Charming Paris* at the Casino, and *Ladies Cocktail* at the Folies Bergère are both doing excellent business, though the usual departure of American troops is having its effect. The latter production is really notable for its beautiful décor and lighting, well up to pre-war standards, but the former is more popular in other respects, as it has a clown, Nobad, who several times tops the show.

So far as the legitimate stage is concerned, there are some very successful comedies, notably *Les Plus Beaux Yeux du Monde* by Jean Sarment at the Edouard VII, and this is by the critic Marcel Thiébaut at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, with a delightful performance by Sylvia in the name part. Of the more ambitious productions, *Le Soldat et la Vierge* at the Sarah Bernhardt is probably the most acceptable, though a recent arrival from the poet Aubiberti, curiously entitled *Ant-Quoat* (the name of an Aztec god) does not live up to its high hopes with its first act, and then begins to peter out.

Françoise Rosay, after her wartime exile in England, had a rapturous welcome in *Seducteur* by André Birabeau, but the rôle fell too much between the twin stools of comedy and drama to be entirely successful, and has since moved to Brussels. On the whole, however, the Parisian stage is largely dependent on revivals and imitations, and is particularly partial to English plays. A big success has been achieved by *Le Printemps de Saint-Martin*, which turned out to be Coward's *Fallen Angels*. Jeanne Aubert, who will be familiar to English audiences for her appearances in *Nothing Goes* and *Command Performance*, repeated the part created by Tallulah Bankhead, but her performance was too "musical comedy" entirely to satisfy those who remember the sharp edge Tallulah gave to the part. Other British plays which have had outstanding successes during the present season are *Murder in the Cathedral*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Ladies in Retirement*, *Virage Géreux* (Dangerous Corner) and *Le Petit Etincelant* (The Flashing Stream). *Arson and Old Lace* is still running



MARTHE DUGARD

leading lady at the Théâtre du Parc, Brussels.

merrily, and seems likely to repeat its London and New York triumphs. Other popular revivals include the inevitable *L'Aiglon*, and Yvonne Printemps and Pierre Fresnay in *Viens de Paraitre*, by Jacques Deval, author of *Tovarich*. So far its only English production has been at the Liverpool Playhouse, under the title of *Best Sellers*. Finally, Shakespeare is represented by an ambitious but not altogether satisfying presentation of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Passing to Brussels, the situation is very similar, except that the theatres there do not go in for a long run policy, except the Vaudeville, where *Mou-Mou*, a typical French farce, has been filling the house for months. At the other theatres, a run of three or four weeks seems to be the rule, with semi-permanent companies, reinforced periodically by visiting stars. Thus Jeanne Aubert recently repeated her Paris performance in *Fallen Angels* at the Molière, where Arnaud is now appearing in *Mon Bébé*, a new version of our old friend, *Baby Mine*. At the Galeries, *Topaze*, in which Delysia and Raymond Massey appeared in London some years ago, has been followed by Françoise Rosay in *Le Séducteur*, and it is playing to packed houses. There is a very talented repertory company at the Théâtre des Beaux-Arts, among whose current successes are Jean Cocteau's dramatic

(Continued on page 33)

Whispers from the Wings

BY
LOOKER CH

I WAS wrong about Edith Evans. When she returns from America in a few weeks she will appear in Rodney Ackland's new dramatisation of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, and in the late autumn we are to see her once more as Shakespeare's Cleopatra. Recently, on the last night of *The Rivals*, I offered to try and procure a copy of the Dostoevsky novel, thinking it would make suitable reading for her journey. Much as she appreciated my thought, Dame Edith refused. She leaves all research to the dramatist and never taps other sources in an endeavour to discover fresh details about his characters behind his back.

In the past we have admired Dame Edith's Cleopatra, Josephine, Florence Nightingale and Sarah Jennings. She gave us four vivid portraits of women who have left their mark on history. Yet, during her study of these parts she never went to the British Museum to pore over tomes in order to colour her characterisation with so-called authentic detail.

She maintains it is the first duty of any actress to play her author. If he writes a play about Helen of Troy it is surely his job to carry out the research work. He must read everything possible about her and create his character from the evidence he accumulates. He might find some conflicting opinions, in which case he has to make up his mind which he considers the right one, and draw his character accordingly. When the work is produced the actress must accept his findings and play the character he has created. If she goes to ancient chronicles for local colour she might strike a work which presents Helen in a different light. Far from being helped by such knowledge she will only be confused, and may even come to cross-purposes with her author and producer by knowing too much.

According to Dame Edith there is no difference between playing a fictitious character and an historical one. She tackles Mrs. Malaprop and Queen Elizabeth from the same angle. They are both creations of a dramatist. As an actress she considers it her business to discover what kind of woman the dramatist has conceived, and to

play it to the best of her ability. The fact that one woman has actually lived, and the other is a mere figment of the author's imagination means nothing at all.

Though Dame Edith ignores outside search work, she combs every line of the play for any shred of evidence likely to throw light on her own part. Antony, for instance, worships Cleopatra; Enobarbus on the other hand, considers her a strumpet and has no good word for her. One piece of evidence has to be weighed against the other if the real truth is to be discovered. What we ultimately see is Edith Evans' conception of Shakespeare's Cleopatra, which is not necessarily Edith Evans's own idea of Cleopatra.

If an actress carries out independent research she may discover interesting facts and see her historical heroine in a new light, but she cannot impose these facts upon the author's play, which has already been created as a complete work of art. She can only make deductions from evidence existing within the play itself; on no account must she be clever and work against the author. His script is to be her gospel.

Mrs. Patrick Campbell held similar views. When she decided to play Anastasia in *The Matriarch*, G. B. Stern, the author, offered to take her to Hampstead and introduce her to the old lady who inspired her to create the character, but Mrs. Pat refused. The play, as written, was good enough for her. She had no wish to throw a spanner in the works by allowing outside impressions to pollute her own conception of the part.

Dame Edith has never read Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. She has no intention of doing so at this stage. She may read it after the first night; she may postpone the pleasure until after the last night, but she is delighted with Rodney Ackland's dramatisation and has every intention of playing it as it stands. The fact that it is based on a world-famous Russian novel is neither here nor there. "The play's the thing."

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Echoes from Broadway (Continued)

elegant duplex hotel suite, and buying a Senator to swing him around the red tape that is choking his chances of putting over some dubious deals. In Washington's politics he also discovers there is an important social side not in keeping with his own kept lady, so he contracts with a young and forthright newspaper correspondent (Mary Merrill) to give her less bedroom and more drawing room colour. Next we find our blonde dumb-bell sopping up culture behind a pair of impressive glasses to the strains of Sibelius. But a little learning again turns out to be a dangerous thing. Her brain is starting to work and she is confused, for she cannot understand why Harry Brock can "own" a Senator and have him do his bidding instead of working for the welfare of the thousands of little people who voted for him. A sharp slap of the face and an order to cut the culture and come back to his level, convinces Miss Ellie Dawn that a life with her teacher-newspaper man is infinitely more desirable. Thus she walks out on her minks—but not before she throws a monkey wrench into the bewildered Harry's scrap-heap and leaves him practically holding prison bars. Miss Holliday is blessed with a tiny dumb-bell that squeaks its way out of her mouth with a pathetic fascination, which she backs up with the exercising of a body movement that is more devastating than any dialogue could ever be. All of which is of vital aid to Mr. Kanin in getting over his alert if not always tremendously funny lines. In writing *Born Yesterday*, Mr. Kanin was faced with the added predicament of having to dialogue not one but two dumb leading characters. Here Paul Douglas is of equal importance, for he not only succeeds in making Harry Brock a likeable fool but packs a variety of expression into his "lug" language he is called upon to act across the footlights. In his direction, Mr. Kanin has seen to it that every possible laugh is squeezed out of the proceedings, and he moves his expertly chosen cast with assured competence. To magnify the good, Donald Oenslager has delivered a acting that is superbly right in being in such expensive bad taste.

Walter Huston is always sure of a welcome when he decides the time is ripe for another fling on the New York stage as an escape from the monotony of film-making—when the vehicle he selects is as slight as *Apple of His Eye*, by Kenyon Nicholson and Charles Robinson, which Jed Harris has staged and produced in association with Mr. Huston. *Apple of His Eye* is another variation of the May-December romance. Sam Over (Walter Huston), a wealthy widowed timer in his fifties gets a yen for Lily Bin (Mary James), his hired girl, who is young enough to be his daughter. His courtship, in which he tries to impress the apple

of his eye that he is as good as any young buck, merely proves there's no fool like an old fool. His own son, daughter-in-law, gossipy neighbours express their distaste and disapproval of his carryings-on, but all ends well when Lily realises she's always loved Sam and would like to be his new wife. That's about enough material for a one-act play but it has been distended to cover a full theatrical evening. The result is a pleasant if not an exciting play that is receiving a moderate audience response.

Robert Ardrey, author of *Thunder Rock*, entered the Negro problem sweepstakes with his latest play, *Jeb*, and became an also-ran. He, too, placed a returning Negro G.I. in the Deep South and let the usual lurid melodrama of frenzied mobs, beatings, near lynchings, house burnings, etc., run full force without much conviction. In his leading character, the soldier Jeb, he created a man of great stature but he failed to write a play around him.

A minor contribution added to Michael Todd's roster of current attractions is *January Thaw*, adapted by William Roos from the amusing and best-selling novel by Bellamy Partridge. It all tots up to a nice little stock comedy but the indefatigable Mr. Todd is doing his darnedest to push it into the hit calibre.

The Theatre in Paris and Brussels (Cont'd)

but sordid *Les Parents Terribles*, *L'Otage*, and *Week End* (Noel Coward's *Hay Fever*), but the most satisfying theatrical entertainment to be found in the city at present is at the Théâtre du Parc, where short runs of modern plays alternate with a series of excellent classical revivals. Of the former, *Tessa*, a very faithful version of *The Constant Nymph*, is proving a terrific draw, and interesting future productions include *Père*, Edouard Bourdet's latest comedy, and *La Sauvage*. Shakespeare is represented by *Romeo and Juliet*, which was so successful that it is being repeated later in the season, and an eagerly awaited production of *Hamlet*. Other interesting forthcoming classics are De Musset's *On ne Badine pas avec L'Amour*, Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* and *Antigone*. This theatre is particularly fortunate in having, in Marthe Dugard, a leading lady who not only has something of the appearance of Elizabeth Bergner, but much of her talent. In spite of her slight physique, she has great emotional power, and can tackle the most exacting classical roles. The part of Tessa might have been written for her, and in it she gives one of the most moving performances Brussels has seen for some time. Her Saint Joan was another outstanding interpretation, and her Ophelia is eagerly awaited.

To sum up, therefore, both in Brussels and Paris the theatre is flourishing. But if the boom is to continue, they, like us, must find some new playwrights.

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The future programme of this original group includes a recital by Margaret Rawlings at the Load of Hay, Haverstock Hill, on March 31; a poetry reading by John Sidney at Norbury Hotel on April 10; three further performances of *True Lovers' Knot* at Manor Hotel, Chingford Hatch, on April 2, Kingsley Hall, Bow, on April 8, Railway Hotel, Greenford, on April 9, Toynbee Hall, E.1, on April 12, St. Saviour's Hall, N.22, on April 13.

Any inquiries concerning The Taverners should be addressed to Mr. John Holgate, Room 167, St. Stephen's House, Westminster, S.W.1.

Using a picked cast of amateurs from its member societies in the area, North London Theatre Guild presents its second annual production at Toynbee Hall on April 6 and 13, at 7 p.m. The play is *The Witch*, by Weirs Jennisens, a drama of life in Bergen, Norway, in 1574. Mrs. Gaskell will produce. North London amateurs interested in the Guild should communicate with the Hon. Sec. at 24 Abingdon Road, N.3.

The Curtain Players, Birmingham, are staging scenes from Shakespeare early in May, and invite enquiries from interested readers who would like to join the group. Miss Gina Manley, 72 Tenbury Road, King's Heath, Birmingham, is the Director.

Clayesmore D.S. are following their production of Shaw's *Arms and the Man* at the pool in Dorset on March 23 with another performance at Toynbee Hall, London, on April 1 at 7.30 p.m.

New plays published by Deane & Sons include *Treasure Island*, from Stevenson's novel by Susan Richmond; *The Lights Go Out*, a farce for women by M. E. Atkinson; *Czy Pavements*, a country comedy by A. Sherratt; *Carnborough Folk*, a country drama by Robert Horspool. All are short plays, published at 1/3, except the *Treasure Island* adaptation, a longer piece six scenes for a cast of 11 to 23, which published at 2/6.

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More About Covent Garden

(Continued from page 19)

is already a ballerina performance of crystal clear technique, poise and beauty. David Paltenghi as the Prince supports very well but classical ballet really needs a more highly trained *danseur noble* with the "line," attack and speed of movement which alone can enhance the exciting quality of the ballerina in a *pas de deux*. Gordon Hamilton's Carabosse, witch-like after Helpmann's subtle and flashing Spanish *grande dame*, has a fine sense of gesture and Henry Danton's easy "line" as Florestan helps an intrinsically poor dance (the fact that the music was written for a woman may partly explain the weakness of this male solo). Margaret Dale has gained in bird-like swiftness since she last danced the Blue Bird, and it is a tribute that technically she is not inferior to Violetta Prokhorova, the young Moscow dancer, in the part, although in classical carriage and breadth and lyricism of arm movement the Russian has much to teach the English. With her fabulous' instep and *developpe*, and sunlit charm Prokhorova is an ornament to be cherished by English ballet. Alexis Rassine has given sparkle and a new fluid control to the male Blue Bird and must now rank as the best classical dancer after Helpmann, in a company not strong on the male side and not always ready to make use of its best.

The review of the second programme of ballet films presented by the London Archives of the Dance last month at Caxton Hall is unavoidably held over until our next issue.

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